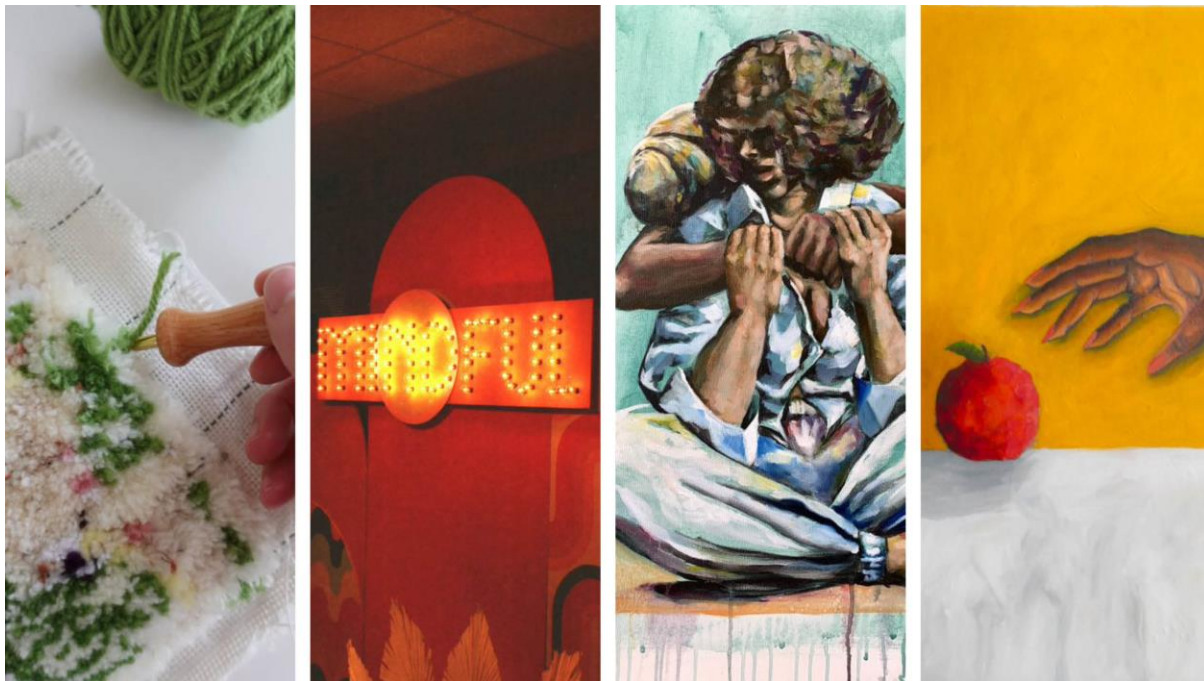


For Immediate Release

Arts Commons Galleries: Summer Season Exhibitions Explore the Effects of Emotional Disconnection, Physical Dislocation, and Cultural Displacement

June 23, 2022 – CALGARY – What makes us unique is also what makes us different. This summer, Arts Commons explores how individual perspectives are at once formed by, yet isolated from, community. Through constructed spaces, captivating portraits, and intricate soundscapes, Arts Commons Galleries invite Calgarians to imagine the shared identities that emerge in the formative space between individual and society. [Exhibitions are live now at Arts Commons](#), which are, as always, **free and open to the public**.

Located in Centre Court of Arts Commons, the [Ledge Gallery](#) features installation and figure-drawing artist ZIYA, whose interrogation of the immigrant experience comes to life in *Belong(s)*. By recreating the physical spaces inhabited by recent immigrants in needlework and yarn, ZIYA's work calls attention to the physical and emotional displacement faced by new Canadians and lays bare the internal struggles confronted by Asian women who must reconcile what it means to be Asian, female, and other.



The Summer Season includes work by (L-to-R) ZIYA, UYEMI, Rebekah Ogden, and Apiow Akwai. (Photos by the artists)

The [Window Galleries](#), located outside the lobby of the Max Bell Theatre in Arts Commons, features four artists whose visually divergent work unites on the theme of self-discovery in times of turbulence. These works ask the audience to be present, acknowledge discomfort, and release through the healing power of the arts. Apiow Akwai's *Self-evaluation* offers deconstructed portraits that reflect on the challenges of forging whole-hearted connections during a global pandemic that kept us physically, mentally, and emotionally quarantined. Mila Datta's

Gesture Speaks puts abstract human sculptures into conversation with each other and beckons the audience to understand conversation conducted not with words, but through gesture. Nick Rooney's *Secrets of Sculptures* turns a critical eye to the dynamics of cultural conquest and the impact of de-contextualized historical artifacts on subject communities. Finally, Rebbekah Ogden's *Pause Captured* reflects on a society preoccupied with constant achievement. Her paintings depict the moments of self-reflection that occur when we stop striving and focus on the present.

"Given the impact the pandemic continues to have, this season's visual artists navigate immersive experiences in the public space through the language of art," says Sanja Lukac, Arts Commons Visual & Media Arts Curator. "By exploring interpersonal and social tension with forthright authenticity, these works bridge the gap between artist and audience through a shared sense of intimacy and belonging."

Artist Ebony R. Gooden takes up residence in the [Lightbox Studio](#), located beside the Martha Cohen Theatre. Her work, the *SURVIVANCE: Animation Series*, shares the experience of Black, Deaf women from around the world through performance monologues that address how the effects of systemic oppression are compounded for those with intersectional identities. Gooden's unique voice advocates for connections that inspire individual and collective empowerment and provides a platform for forging shared identities through the articulation of individual struggle. Her exhibition will be on display throughout Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Month this September.

The exhibitions in our visual arts galleries are part of the [RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program \(RBC EVAP\)](#), which provides opportunities for emerging visual artists in Calgary to develop their artistic practice, to showcase their work to the public, and hone their professional skills to build a solid foundation for a successful career.

Featured in our media art galleries, Broadcast Lab and +15 Soundscape, artists are participants in the 2021-22 **TD Incubator** program, which supports artists who move between and blend artistic forms – musicians who make their own films, dancers who are blending movement with visual art – the possibilities are endless.

The [Broadcast Lab](#), located on monitors throughout Arts Commons, showcases the work of three artists from the TD Incubator program who explore the embodied experience. Nicole Charlton Goodbrand's *The Skin of an Octopus-Prologue* combines physical movement and spoken word to understand the constraints of the human body. Uyemi's piece *No Comfort Zone* focuses on our personal limitations and urges us to reach beyond our discomfort for something more. Finally, Oseremen Irete presents *Blue Line*, an AI-enhanced progression of photographs that captures how moments and memories shift through time.

Coming up this July in the [+15 Soundscape](#), Jae Sterling and Contra explore the ephemeral nature of the moment with *SEVEN PORTALS*, a complex aural collage which plunges the listener into a world where hip-hop beats, spoken word, and electric static collide. Though a sonic tapestry that alternates between recognizable rhythms and oblique meditative landscapes, *SEVEN PORTALS* guides the listener to embrace opposites, find peace in impermanence, and live in the moment.

To see all of the exhibitions online, visit artscommons.ca/learn-engage/visual-and-media-arts. The current exhibitions will be available for viewing until September 11, 2022; The *SURVIVANCE: Animation Series* runs until September 30, 2022 in the Lightbox studio.

For media inquiries or more information contact:

Alex Bonyun, Communications Manager
403-294-7429 abonyun@artscommons.ca

Arts Commons is the largest performing arts centre in Western Canada located in the heart of downtown Calgary. For over 35 years, it has been a key contributor to the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life and well-being of Calgarians. It is home to six resident companies, including Alberta Theatre Projects, Arts Commons Presents, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Downstage, One Yellow Rabbit, and Theatre Calgary. It houses six gallery spaces, five theatres, and the Jack Singer Concert Hall, and promotes local, national, international, emerging and established artists with a focus on inclusion, diversity, accessibility, and equity.

Apiow Akwai is an emerging artist based in Calgary, Alberta. Her work primarily focuses on the contrast between light and dark shadows; highlighting the fine details of the dark and beautiful chaos of emotions that is intentionally portrayed across all her work. Akwai graduated from Sheridan College in the *Visual and Creative Arts* program and has over six years of experience working with youth in educational, recreational programming, and teaching visual arts. She has worked with non-profit organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, and has spearheaded art-based initiatives to inspire young people from at-risk communities to have a creative outlet.

Nicole Charlton Goodbrand is a Calgary-based dance artist, choreographer, and dance educator. She is interested in creating work that is heeded by curiosity and highlights the magic that can be found in the mundane. The subject matters she explores emphasize the everyday narrative of humans and their relationships to one another, to themselves, and to the environments they construct. She uses dance and performance art to create both solo and ensemble work that illustrates the layered complexities of surreptitious human behaviour and distorted personal realities.

Contra is a multidisciplinary artist who navigates the Canadian arts and culture landscape as a musician, director, producer, and creative strategist. Her most prominent project to date is *Cartel Madras*, an expansive and experimental music project, now signed under Sub Pop Records. As a founding member of the THOTNATION/SANSFUCCS collective, her artistic journey has also brought her into the world of art direction, visual production, and creative strategy. Challenging cities, industries, and narratives to allow new voices in is at the very centre of how Contra pursues all her creative endeavours; furthering culture and allowing art to thrive.

Mila Datta is a Calgary-based visual artist, with a primary focus on sculpture. She graduated from University of Calgary, with a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts. Her work in sculpture explores the communicative power of gesture through minimal abstracted figural forms and is intended to provoke familiarity, dialogue, and question. Though she currently works in more traditional materials, Datta hopes to create work utilizing recycled, and uncommon materials in the future.

Ebony R. Gooden is a freelance artist, digital media artist and activist based in Calgary, Alberta. She is active in the Calgary arts community, consulting on issues of accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusion for visible minority artists who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Her unique voice empowers her to bridge the gap between various communities,

allowing people from all walks of life to better understand what it is like to be Black and Deaf. Combining her artistic know-how and her passion for activism, Ebony is currently the Marketing Coordinator for Inside Out Theatre.

Rebbekah Ogden is a Calgary-based artist who trained at Rosebud School of the Arts where she received an FRSA in Theatre Arts following her four years of study. While her visual art is a self-taught, she has had the pleasure of being mentored by artists Randle Wiebe and Julie Himel. In 2020, Ogden received the Bloom Grant award for visual art and her work has been exhibited at the Akokiniskway Gallery in Rosebud and the Godfrey Dean Art Gallery in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. She is currently involved in Arts Commons, RBC Emerging Visual Artist Program.

Oseremen Irete is a Nigerian-Canadian storyteller, documentarian, and digital hoarder based in Southern Alberta. His work occupies the space between journalism and art, blending documentary video, photography, music, poetry, essays and more. Influenced by his background in Anthropology, Oseremen is interested in storytelling as a form of ethnography of self and using documentary techniques to make sense of his own experiences.

Nick Rooney obtained his MA in Painting from the University of the Arts London. Much of his early career was spent focusing on the craft of oil painting developing a contemporary art practice deeply rooted in art history. His current studio work looks at the relationship between the reductive formalism of geometric minimalism and the complexity of classical realism. Rooney has exhibited both locally as well as internationally, most recently being selected to participate in the Saatchi Gallery's exhibition London Grads Now. He resides Calgary (Mohkínsstsi), Alberta.

Jae Sterling is a multidisciplinary artist and founding member of the THOTNATION/SANSFUCCS collective. Beginning as a musician, he has extended his art form over the years to include painting (acrylic & oil), digital design & mixed media, streetwear design, and written essays. Sterling has spent the past few years developing his artistry by weaving his experiences growing up in Jamaica, South Florida, and coming into adulthood in Canada into all his projects. His exploration in hip hop led him to be selected for the National Music Centre's Alberta residency program. To date, Sterling has released four music projects and has toured in Alberta & Ontario.

Uyemi was born in Nigeria and raised in Canada. She found her voice listening to the outliers of neo-soul and contemporary R&B, from Erykah Badu and SZA to Frank Ocean and Jhené Aiko. Her debut Butterfly Effect EP excavates the depths of love, heartbreak, sexuality, and the battle within yourself. Uyemi landed in the Top 100 of CBC's Searchlight contest in 2020 for her self-empowering single *Don't Get in Your Way* about choosing the wrong people in love and loving yourself first before loving another. Since then, she has released a number of singles and become a go-to vocalist in the Alberta music scene.

Ziya Lin is a Chinese artist who lives and works in Calgary. She primarily works in drawing and art installations, exploring the themes of identity and female subjectivity. Lin received her BFA degree from the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, China in 2014 and finished a Master's of Fine Arts degree at the University of Calgary in 2017. Her work has been exhibited in China and Canada, including shows at Nickel Galleries, Art Point Gallery and Studio Society. In 2016, her drawings were featured in Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry's *Still I rise: A tribute to Maya Angelou* (University of Alberta).